

Spring 2010

## Can you identify this courthouse?



(See page 3 for the location.)



The original courthouse  
burned in 1891.



A replacement courthouse  
was built in 1893.

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# Connections

## Introducing MSC Security and Emergency Management Director John Ort

In May 2007, John Ort was appointed as Michigan Supreme Court (MSC) Security and Emergency Management Director. He was hired by the MSC in June 2005, as its first Trial Court Security Specialist. He came to the Court with 29 years of law enforcement and public safety experience. John is a former Michigan State Police (MSP) Captain and Deputy State Director of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

John has administrative and operational responsibility for the MSC and Court of Appeals security and emergency management programs. He develops safety and security policies and procedures for Michigan trial courts, and he advises judges and court staff on matters relating to court security and emergency management. As part of his security-related responsibilities, John conducts threat and risk assessments,

performs research and analysis, and provides training for the judiciary and many judicial branch associations.

Before his retirement as commander of the MSP Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, John was the Governor's authorized representative for Presidentially Declared Disasters and was the state coordinating officer for state and local disaster recovery projects. John also served as chairman of the Michigan Homeland Security Advisory Council, the Michigan Homeland Security Task Force, the State Emergency Response Commission, and the Michigan Hazard Mitigation Coordinating Council.

John enlisted in the MSP in June 1979, and is a graduate of the 96<sup>th</sup> State Police Academy. During his 26-year career with the MSP, he served at the Romeo, Niles, Lansing, and Battle Creek posts. He also served in the MSP Executive Division; Fire Marshal Division; Investigative Resources and Intelligence Section; Uniform Services Bu-

reau; and the Special Operations Division, where he was responsible for the Aviation, Traffic Services, Prevention Services, Field Services, and Operations sections.

Before joining the MSP, John was a Detective Sergeant with the Cass County Sheriff's Department and a former officer with the Howard Township Police Department in southwestern Michigan. He is also a graduate of the Lake Michigan College Basic Police Academy.

John has been married to his wife Cynthia for 32 years and they reside in Charlotte with their two Yorkshire terriers (Baxter and Issy). The Orts' daughter, Ashley (VandeKopple), and son, Brandon, are graduates of Cedarville University in Ohio. Ashley is completing her master's degree in high school counseling at Grand Valley State University and is employed by the Michigan Department of Community Health, Office of Public Health Preparedness in Lansing. Ashley's husband, Tim, is employed as an engineer with Innotec Group in Zeeland. Brandon Ort is a graphic designer and is employed by Coho Creative, LLC in Cincinnati, Ohio. Brandon's wife, Stacey, is (continued on page 3)



# Court Brings Higher Level of Integrity to Its Files Without Impairing Accessibility

*Submitted by Nancy Waters, Muskegon County Clerk, and Patricia Steele, Court Administrator, 16th Circuit Court—Muskegon*

In January 2009, County Clerk Nancy Waters and Chief Circuit Judge John C. Ruck requested an assessment of circuit court records procedures to determine

the level of compliance with the Michigan Supreme Court Case File Management Standards, Michigan statutes, and court rules. SCAO Management Ana-

lyst Jim Inloes conducted the study and developed his findings after meeting with court and clerk staff and observing operations (continued on page 3)



## The Role of the Trial Court Security Specialist

*Submitted by Dennis Mac Donell, Trial Court Security Specialist*



What role does the Trial Court Security Specialist (TCSS) play for the trial courts in Michigan? The TCSS is a part of the Security and Emergency Management Division of the Michigan Supreme Court. The TCSS acts as a security resource person for all the trial courts in Michigan. When invited by a chief judge or court administrator to review the security preparedness at a courthouse, the TCSS makes recommendations to modify or enhance security for the courts, judges, employees, and visitors. Most of the recommendations focus on improving security for existing staff and critiquing the equipment and physical structure of the courthouse, while taking into consideration the current economic conditions.

Most courts can improve security by following a few initial steps:

### 1. Formalize a Security Committee

Establish a standing Security Committee, encouraging participation of all the courts and other govern-

ment entities that occupy the building.

### 2. Establish a Security Improvement Plan

The Security Committee should conduct a risk assessment to determine what personnel, offices, and functions need to be protected and from what they are to be protected. This risk assessment could be formulated as a five-year plan for implementation of all security goals, while taking incremental steps to achieve those goals.

### 3. Review and Train to the Security Plan

Written procedures increase the chances of saving lives or reducing injuries, and allow for control over potentially disruptive incidents. This plan can be used to train all the employees about their roles in enhancing security for themselves, their fellow employees, and the visiting public.

Usually, security becomes an issue right after an incident has happened. Some courts have taken a proactive approach and antici-

pated problems. By asking the “what if” questions, these courts work toward the development of the security improvement plan.

Another role of the TCSS is to provide safety and security training sessions for those who work in the courts or with our court employees. These training sessions have covered various topics of personal and office safety, courtroom security, workplace violence, and active shooter situations.

Providing training for all the employees helps raise the security awareness level for both the employees and the entire court.

Dennis will address *Court Security – Who is Responsible?* in the Summer 2010 edition of *Connections*.

*Dennis Mac Donell is MSC's Trial Court Security Specialist. He came to the MSC in March 2008 after more than 30 years in law enforcement. He can be reached at 517-373-2199 or [macdonell@courts.mi.gov](mailto:macdonell@courts.mi.gov).*

## Introducing John Ort (continued from page 1)

currently a medical student at Boonshoft School of Medicine, Wright State University, in Ohio. Cynthia is a homemaker. She also does volunteer work for their church and is a mentor mom for the Mothers of Preschoolers program.

“Among my greatest blessings in life have been my family, my career with the MSP, and now my second career with the MSC and my security team,” said John. “I’ve worked for and

with some of the most dedicated and professional people I know in Michigan’s criminal justice system. It’s truly a privilege to be able to provide leadership in such a critically important area as court security.”

John added, “I believe the courtroom is the last stop in our democratic process to right wrongs and resolve disputes. Free and open access to justice requires a safe and secure environment in which all those who

come into the courtroom are free from fear and intimidation; otherwise truth and justice cannot prevail and public confidence will be lost. Likewise, maintaining respect and decorum in our courtrooms will be a long-term challenge and the responsibility of all its stakeholders.”

*John Ort can be contacted at [ortj@courts.mi.gov](mailto:ortj@courts.mi.gov) or at 517-373-4427.*

**“I believe the courtroom is the last stop in our democratic process to right wrongs and resolve disputes.”**

## Muskegon Files (continued from page 2)

observing operations within the clerk’s office and the court.

Mr. Inloes made nine recommendations, among them (1) open case files should be



stored in the clerk’s office and (2) case files should never be given to attorneys, parties, or the public without the supervision of a deputy clerk. These directly

confronted historically entrenched practices. In Muskegon, individual judges held files in their offices for substantial periods of time to assure ready accessibility. Additionally, files “traveled” throughout the court with no dependable tracking system. Files were transported by par-

ties, and attorneys took files to their office. While these practices had been established over the years out of practical necessity for a court and clerk whose staffs were severely limited, the need for change was clear.

The court and clerk redesigned file retention and access procedures to align them with the case file management standards. Additional measures ensured the integrity of the file itself. Files no longer may be accessed outside of the circuit court records office. Judges no longer store files in their offices for long periods of time. Designated judicial staff work with the clerk’s staff to ensure that files are available as needed. Working together and without adding staff, we have made real improvements to the process. The use of electronic file

“imaging” technology was invaluable in allowing the clerk to provide file access to other departments without the need to physically handle them. Some problems remain in terms of having court personnel deputized to act as deputy clerks in the courtroom. But the procedures implemented as a result of the study have brought a higher level of integrity to the court’s files without impairing accessibility.



### Puzzle Answers (puzzle on page 10)

Quarterly  
Connections  
Interesting

7  
6  
5

Upcoming Events  
Q&A  
Staff

Down  
1  
2  
4

Across  
3  
Deadlines  
8  
Introductions  
9  
Media 101

The courthouse on the cover is in Muskegon County.  
The current courthouse has been occupied since the early 1960s.



# Genesee County Juvenile Mental Health Court Program

*Submitted by James N. Bauer, Court Administrator/Register  
Genesee County Probate Court*

Anyone who works in the juvenile system can tell you that the number of kids with mental health issues is increasing. The question is, "what do we do with these kids?" One answer is Juvenile Mental Health Court. In October 2007, Genesee County Chief Probate Judge Jennie Barkey established mental health court as an intensive treatment program for mentally ill adults who have committed a crime. In April 2009, the program was expanded to include a program for juveniles.

In the juvenile mental health court, kids who have been charged with misdemeanors (and some felonies) are first screened for a mental health diagnosis. If the child fits the established criteria and is accepted into mental health court, the child and parents must appear weekly for review hearings before Judge Barkey. The child must also take medication, go to school, and attempt to earn privileges. The judge and the kids have weekly contact. As a result, they get to know each other and establish a bond.

A juvenile probation officer is assigned to the mental health court: she makes visits each week, both at home and at school. Genesee County Com-



The Honorable Jennie Barkey  
First Wave of Students Graduate from Judge's  
Juvenile Mental Health Court, 1/25/10  
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munity Mental Health therapists are also involved, and offer comments at each hearing relative to the child's progress. An attorney appointed to represent the child is also present at each hearing.

At the hearings, both sanctions and rewards may be imposed. For example, at a recent review, a child had a great week at school so a privilege (the use of her cell phone) was returned.

Other rewards include fewer court appearances, applause, and even gift certificates! If a child has a bad week, the child may be assigned community service, lose certain privileges (such as driving, cell phones or video games) or, occasionally, be ordered to secure detention.

The program started with four children, and now has grown to 12 participants. Recently, a graduation was held and the first graduates were honored for completing the nine-month program. At the graduation ceremony, the three graduates enjoyed chocolate cake and received gifts. The court dismissed the charges—including malicious destruction of property, assault and battery, and probation violation.

All of the graduates—and their families—agreed that their lives were significantly improved after completing juvenile mental health court. It is hoped that programs such as this will reduce the number of crimes perpetrated by mentally ill adults.

## *"Project Fresh*

*Start serves as an  
alternative to jail  
and is designed  
primarily to  
address the  
quality of life  
issues that  
prostitution brings  
to Wayne County."*

## **Project Fresh Start Changing One's Quality of Life**

*Submitted by Kim Thomas Chapman  
Director of Probation/Project Director DTC  
36th District Court—Detroit*

The Project Fresh Start program is a specialized track of our drug treatment court. The program addresses the problems of prostitution and drug addiction that plague our city and surrounding community. There are approximately 500 known prostitutes on the streets of Wayne County. The Fresh Start program was

the first of its kind to address this problem in Michigan. Through the collaborative efforts of city prosecutors, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, the Detroit Police Department, the 36th District Court, and the City of Detroit's Department of Health and Wellness (continued on page 5)



## Project Fresh Start (continued from page 4)

Promotion, Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Recovery (BSAPTR), the outcry for help from the citizens of Wayne County was answered in April 2004 with the birth of *Project Fresh Start*.

Once these women of the sex trade are removed from the streets, they are closely monitored for 15 to 24 months. They are given jail-based acute detoxification, substance abuse treatment, mental health evaluations, and medical and STD screenings, and they are enrolled in community-based programs, followed by transitional living. They are also provided with job-training, parenting skills, employment, wrap-around services, independent living skills, and ultimately with family reunification services. Following graduation and successful completion of the program, the criminal cases of the participants are dismissed. The program initially targeted 100 women. Since its inception, a total of 279 women have entered the program, resulting in 94 graduates and 58 drug-free babies!

We also work closely with agencies that focus on the needs of men who sleep with men. This module of the program addresses the issues of substance abuse and sexuality. As a result of the needs of some of our male participants, we have found these programs to be very successful because the men have facilities where they can attain recovery and not be ostracized

by others. At the 38<sup>th</sup> Drug Court graduation in January, the Fresh Start program had its first transgender graduate.

Project Fresh Start serves as an alternative to jail and is designed primarily to address the quality of life issues that prostitution brings to Wayne County. It is a component of our drug court program that allows the participants an opportunity to rebuild their lives and become productive citizens. This program is worthy of the national and local recognition it has received. It has been featured on the National Geographic channel, in The Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press, on Comcast television, and continues to serve as a model for the nation. The 36<sup>th</sup> District Court was named the “*Second Best Drug Court in the Nation*” in 2006 for providing creative, innovative programming for substance abuse.

The dedicated team of Project Fresh Start is headed by the Honorable Leonia J. Lloyd, who was recently honored with the 2009 Champion of Justice Award by the State Bar of Michigan. She serves on the Board of Directors for the National and Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals. The 36<sup>th</sup> District Court *team* received the Community Transformation Award from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals in 2009. We are extremely proud of our Drug Treatment Court/Project Fresh Start programs!

*For more information regarding the Project Fresh Start program call Kim Thomas Chapman at (313) 965-3721.*



Project Fresh Start's  
38th Graduation Ceremony



The Honorable Leonia J. Lloyd

## More Free and Low-Cost Resources

The Winter edition of Connections identified a number of resources — many of which are free — that courts can use to help them perform their responsibilities. Following are additional resources:



### Conference Space for Court Associations (so long as there is one member from the judiciary in attendance)

- Region 3 (Mt. Pleasant) has two conference rooms — one that will accommodate 10 people and the other up to 50. Contact Region 3 at 989-772-5934.
- Region 4 (Gaylord) has a conference room that will accommodate 35 people. Contact Region 4 at 989-732-3311.

### Legal Research Sites

- Federal Regulations (CFR) by Cite—<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>
- Federal Register (CFR) Search Terms by Title—<http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html#page1>
- US Code (USC) Search—<http://uscode.house.gov/search/criteria.shtml>
- US Code (USC) by Cite or Title—<http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/>

(continued on page 8)

## Surviving the Ambush Interview

By Marcia McBrien

Public Information Officer, Michigan Supreme Court

Ambush interviews – surprise confrontations between a reporter and the interview “target” – are on the rise, thanks in part to today’s electronic media and the popularity of “reality” shows in which people are made to look foolish and awkward, if not downright unscrupulous. The image of the crusading journalist, posing tough questions to a reluctant but trapped public official, makes for good theater, if not always for good journalism. (Consider the ambush interview in which a Massachusetts school official, who had allegedly excluded candy canes from a school holiday sale, was challenged with, “Why are you trying to ruin Christmas for the children?”)

The ambush interview often, but not always, takes place after the interview subject has declined to be interviewed. In some cases, to prevent an ambush, it may be appropriate to do a sit-down interview with the reporter, which allows the interview subject to have more control (and more time to prepare) than if he or she were caught off-guard.

But sometimes an ambush interview comes without warning, or takes place after a judge has declined to discuss a pending case with a reporter who doesn’t understand the ethical prohibitions. Although these are very difficult

situations, there are ways to make the playing field a little more level:

**Do not get angry or react defensively.** In your tone of voice and body language, be calm, positive, and firm.

**Avoid furtive, “guilty,” body language.** Stand with your legs slightly apart, back straight and hands at your side. Furtive body language – folding your arms, slumping, bowing your head, or looking to the side – makes you look guilty or defensive. Viewers may not remember what you said, but they will recall – and believe – your body language.

**Offer to schedule an interview at your office.** “I have more information at my office and could do a better job answering your questions there.”

**Stand your ground.** Do not run, or the last shot in the interview will be of your rapidly retreating back as the reporter fires questions at you. If you are ambushed while getting in your car, get out of the car and then answer questions.

**Answer three questions and then end the interview.** If you feel that having a sit-down interview with the reporter would improve the situation, renew that

offer at the close of your final response. “And as I said earlier, I could do a better job of answering your questions at my office, where I have the information.”

**Never, ever, EVER say “No comment.”** To a journalist, and indeed to the public, “No comment” is code for “I have something to hide.” Instead, use transitional phrases to explain why you can’t answer in the way the reporter would like, such as:

“Because there is a pending case/investigation, I cannot discuss it at this time. It would not be fair to those involved.”

“What you are asking for is speculation, and I cannot provide you with what might be inaccurate information.”

“I’m glad you asked that question. We are aware of the severity of the situation and are taking things very slowly at this point to avoid any rash comments that might unfairly influence the outcome of the case.”

**If you make a mistake, correct it immediately.** Say, “That came out wrong. What I meant to say was.....” The reporter must report on the new information you gave.

(Continued on page 8)



The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another. The difference between them is sometimes as great as a month.

~Henry Van Dyke

## Court Websites

*Submitted by Keith Beasley, Court Administrator  
16th Circuit Court — Macomb County*



Does your court take advantage of the Internet by providing a website? If you do, attorneys and the public can find out a lot about your court at the tap of a few keys. I can put a court's name in a Google search box and find its site in seconds. If you don't have a site, you are missing a good opportunity to enhance your effectiveness.

Courts are information intensive. Attorneys have difficulty navigating the many different courts they have to work in because each court has its own legal "culture" and unique policies and procedures. Judges in larger courts may have different policies, too. It is much harder for the public. Unfortunately, the uninformed make our day to day work much more difficult. If you don't publish your basic information, policies, and procedures, they can only "learn the hard way" by direct experience, leading to frustration for them, for judges, and for staff.

Thus, it is useful for our court to embrace tools that allow us to deliver information in cost-effective, efficient, and useful ways. The Internet is great for this purpose. It is free, fast, and can provide a wealth of information. Use of the Internet is more and more ubiquitous each year. Many people have Internet access on portable electronic devices. Few users have no Internet access. Even those without home computers can go to local libraries for free access to the Internet.

I've found we can provide a website at no cost to the court other than my time. In the beginning, our local Library Cooperative provided website space to libraries and

county agencies at no charge, and provided the software and training. Within a couple of years the county's IT department started providing webpage templates and software for its departments and the county-funded courts. It doesn't require an expert or a professional designer to create a website, and we control the content ourselves. There are many programs available that allow someone familiar with basic computing to write web content, much like a word processor. In fact, text from word processors can usually be pasted on web pages. It is simple to link to other sites, forms, documents, and pictures. Updates are posted to the Internet within hours and can be done instantly, depending on your set up.

I think it is very helpful to judges and staff to have as much information as possible on the website. We don't need to copy large documents, like local administrative orders, the annual bail bond list, or our local court rules. Phone calls for general information are reduced by having a site. People familiar with it go there first, rather than calling. In answer to many questions, staff can point callers to the website. Confusion on what to do or where to go at the court is reduced. Jurors can learn a lot about what to expect for jury service, including where to park. They learn they can bring wireless computers and books with them. Due to an arrangement with the local library, they can even order books ahead of time. A particularly useful feature is a link to the Internet case look-up feature of our case management system. Anyone can use this feature to see the case information and docket entries for civil and criminal cases.

Here are some suggestions for website content:

- Court location and driving directions.
- Hours of operation.

- Days the court is scheduled to be closed.
- Address(es).
- Phone numbers.
- Directory of judges with biographies.
- Directory of court departments and contact information.
- Case look-up (if supported by your case management system).
- Friend of the Court information.
- Jury service information.
- How to order transcripts and/or copies of video proceedings.
- Local administrative orders.
- Local court rules.
- Policies and procedures.
- Annual bail bond list.
- Court officers.
- Applications to represent indigent defendants, and applications for ADR providers and case evaluators.
- Standard procedural orders.
- Local forms.
- Special programs such as e-filing, conferencing capabilities, etc.
- Frequently asked questions (with answers).

The best way to get started is to open your web browser, Google some courts, and see what they are doing!



Visit Macomb's website at:  
<http://www.macombcountymi.gov/circuitcourt/>



## Surviving the Ambush Interview (continued from page 6)

Bear in mind that dealing with ambush interview questions is very much like countering a particularly hostile cross-examination. Your job is to spot and defuse the questioner's tactics, as in these examples:

### The Question from Left Field

Reporter: "What's this I hear about ..." (trying to get interview subject to speculate)

Response: "I'm not familiar with that fact/situation/case."

### Loaded or False Premise

Reporter: "Since it's well known that..."

Response: "Let's look at that assumption ..."

### Unacceptable Alternatives

Reporter: "Judges are always (a) or (b), right?"

Response: "Neither is true. What's accurate is ..."

### False Conclusions

Reporter: "What you're saying is ..."

Response: "No, that's not what I'm saying. Let me clarify my point ..."

### The Interrupter

Reporter jumps into middle of interview subject's statement.

Response: "I'd be happy to answer that after I've made one final point ..."

### The Layered Question

Reporter asks a layered question, which is actually several questions in a row.

Response: Pick the question that you want to answer and answer that question. If the reporter then accuses you of ducking his or her questions, say, "I am trying to respond, but you asked me several questions in a row. Let's take them one at a time, please."

### Machine-Gun Questions

Reporter bombards interview subject with rapid-fire questions.

Response: "Let's take these questions one at a time ..."

### The Silent Treatment

Reporter leaves long gap in interview (sometimes accompanied by probing stare) hoping interview subject will be made nervous by the silence and rush to fill it.

Response: "What else would you like to know?"

### The Expert

Reporter acts as if she/he knows more than she/he actually does in effort to get interview subject to say more.

Response: "I don't believe that assumption is accurate."

If one of your colleagues is the target of the ambush interview and you happen to be present, you can assist

if your colleague is floundering. Stand up beside your colleague, put out your hand, palm forward, and say, "I think that I can add something" or "I think that I can clarify that."

In answering questions, also keep in mind Dan Rather's dictum that "There are only three legitimate answers to a reporter's question: 1) Yes, I know the answer and here it is. 2) No, I don't know the answer but I'll try to find out. 3) Yes, I do know the answer, but I can't tell you." (But with that third type of answer, be sure and explain *why* you can't answer: "The court rules prohibit me from disclosing the sealed testimony.")

Finally, do not argue with the reporter or make negative statements about the media in general during the interview ("You reporters are only interested in stirring up trouble!") That attitude will not help with your ambush interview. Moreover, by attacking the reporter, you lose any sympathy the audience might have for you – and will endanger relationships with other media.

*Marcia McBrien is an attorney and the MSC's Public Information Officer. "Media 101" is a regular feature of Connections. If you have a media or public relations topic that you'd like to see in a future issue, e-mail Marcia at [McBrienM@courts.mi.gov](mailto:McBrienM@courts.mi.gov).*

## Free Resources (continued from page 5)

●Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL) General Look-up by Section or Key Word—[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(dgol5pvfao0dyk55rzv3hjr5\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=mclbasicsearch](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(dgol5pvfao0dyk55rzv3hjr5))/mileg.aspx?page=mclbasicsearch)

●MCL by Section Number—[http://legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(reqpydfghf5sod2w1h2lnc55\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetMCLDocument&objectname=mcl-%5bInsertChapNum%5d-%5bInsertSecNum](http://legislature.mi.gov/(S(reqpydfghf5sod2w1h2lnc55))/mileg.aspx?page=GetMCLDocument&objectname=mcl-%5bInsertChapNum%5d-%5bInsertSecNum)

●Michigan Court Rules (MCR)—<http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/rules/>

●Michigan Appellate Digest—<http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/Digest/DigestLaunchPage.jsp>

●Court Opinions-Michigan Supreme Court and Court of Appeals—<http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/resources/opinions.htm>

Michigan Official Historical Reports (Pre 1997)—<http://government.westlaw.com/miofficial/historical/>

*Do you know of other free or low cost resources that may be useful to others? Please send them to [connections@courts.mi.gov](mailto:connections@courts.mi.gov) and we will share them in the next issue.*





## Midland County Docket Monitors

*Submitted by Jerome Kole, Midland County Trial Court Administrator*

Providing accurate docket information to the public is essential to providing open access to the courts. With an electronic system available to the public, the paper "thrown on the wall" is eliminated, along with the staff time involved in posting.

In 2006, the Midland County Courts began using an electronic calendar to provide information to the general public about the day's docket. Computer monitors were placed on each floor near the public elevators. The calendars display the day's docket by party name. In addition, the program allows users to obtain weather information and special instructions, such as where to report for jury duty. The display may be overwritten at any time to display emergency information if needed. An RSS feed is used to provide entertaining news stories.

All of our courts use the Judicial Information System for our case management. Hearing dates are fed into a database created by Judicial Management Systems, and our Information Services Department modifies the database to create a display that the public finds easy to read. The system also ties into our web page to allow parties to search for hearings or just view the calendar for a particular day. Data uploads five times per day.

We have received many positive comments on our system. Members of the public use it regularly to find their way to the correct floor and courtroom. The media enjoys the ability to see the time when a particular case is scheduled to be heard.

We have found that public users may not remember if they are going to the circuit,

district, or probate court, or if they are at the courthouse for an informal hearing with a magistrate or to see the friend of the court. But they find it easy to spot their name and go where they have been directed. This not only helps to make their experience at the courthouse a little bit easier, it certainly makes it easier for staff who otherwise would have to look up names and direct people to various courtrooms.

An important part of our job in court administration is to make sure the courts operate as efficiently as possible. By providing clear information to the public, we can help to accomplish that task.



## Legislation Results in Major Changes to Friend of the Court Operations

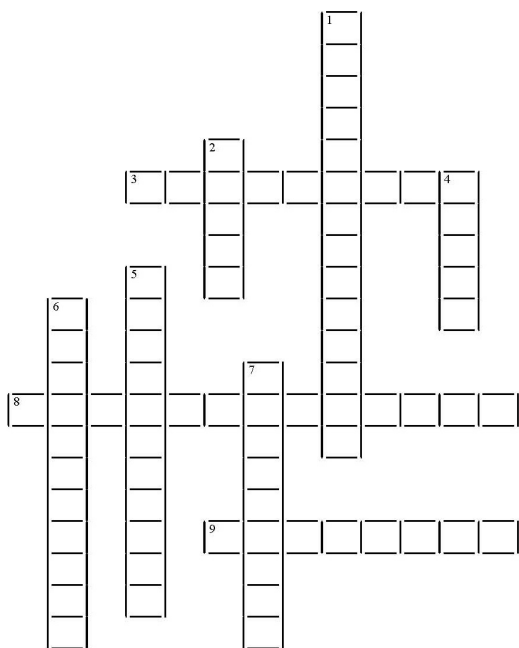
Recently-enacted legislation will greatly impact Friend of the Court (FOC) operations. The legislation will change forms; custody, parenting time, and investigative procedures; alternative dispute resolution procedures; and the surcharge policy. The following documents provide information about the new legislation:

SCAO's Memorandum to Chief Judges and Friend of the Court Directors about Friend of the Court Legislative Changes.

The Pundit (Spring 2010) Article by Calhoun County Friend of the Court Jeff Albaugh: 2009 Legislative Amendments Will Bring Major Changes to Friend of the Court Office Operations.



## How Familiar with Connections are You?



### ACROSS

- 3 August 15, November 15,  
February 15, and May 15  
8 Get to know MSC staff  
9 Author, Marcia McBrien

### DOWN

- 1 Check this out to make plans  
2 Included in every issue  
4 Beth, Dan, Jennifer, Tim, Deb,  
and Katha  
5 Every article  
6 Designed to help courts, professional  
court associations, and the SCAO to  
connect with each other.  
7 How often Connections is published

(Answers are on page 3.)

## Upcoming Events

### March 2010

- 18 FOCA Meeting, Cheers, Mt. Pleasant  
18 CWS Luncheon Webcast: Concurrent Planning Roll Out  
18 Region 2 District Judges Meeting, Kalamazoo  
19 MPJA Meeting, State Bar, Lansing  
19 MDJA Meeting, State Bar, Lansing  
19 CWS Adoption Forum, Kellogg Center, East Lansing  
26 FCRB Advisor Committee Meeting, Hall of Justice  
30 MJI Felony Sentencing Seminar/Webcast, Hall of Justice

### April 2010

- 7-8 CWS Annual Conference, Kellogg Center, East Lansing  
Removal Prevention & Timely Reunification  
13 MFSC Meeting, Lansing  
15 FOCA Meeting, Cheers, Mt. Pleasant  
15 MADCM Meeting, Christie's Bistro, Lansing  
16 MCAA Meeting, Hall of Justice  
16 MDJA Meeting, State Bar, Lansing  
16 Region 3 Probate Judges Meeting, Mt. Pleasant  
20 MJA Meeting, University Club, East Lansing  
23 Region 2 District Court Administrators Meeting  
28-29 MJI Judicial Symposium, Hall of Justice  
28-30 MJI Basic Interviewing, Counseling & Communication  
Higgins Lake

### May 2010

- 3 Law Day Activities, Hall of Justice  
5 CWS New Judge Training, Hall of Justice  
6 Region 2 Circuit Judges Meeting, Hall of Justice  
7 Regions 3 & 4 Circuit Judges Meeting, Mt. Pleasant  
11 MFSC Meeting, Lansing  
11 CWS Training, Kellogg Center, East Lansing  
Transition Plans for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care System  
11-14 Court Managers Conference, Shanty Creek, Bellaire  
18 MJA Meeting, University Club, East Lansing  
20 FOCA Meeting, Cheers, Mt. Pleasant  
20 CWS Luncheon Webcast  
20-21 MAFCA Conference, Holland  
21 MDJA Meeting, State Bar, Lansing  
26-28 MADCPD Conference, Mackinac Island  
26-28 RAM Conference, Traverse City  
31 HOLIDAY

### June 2010

- 3 CWS Judicial Training, Hall of Justice  
4 Region 3 District Judges Meeting, Mt. Pleasant  
8 MFSC Meeting, Lansing  
8-10 MJI Domestic Relations Mediator Training, Hall of Justice  
10-11 Appellate Bench Bar Conference, Plymouth  
14-16 MJI Domestic Relations Mediator Training, Hall of Justice  
15 MJA Meeting, University Club, East Lansing  
17 FOCA Meeting, Cheers, Mt. Pleasant  
17 CWS Luncheon Webcast  
17 Region 2 District Judges Meeting, Kalamazoo  
18 MDJA Meeting, State Bar  
21-25 Learning Center's Exploring Careers Program—High School  
Hall of Justice  
29 MPJA Conference, Boyne Mountain

We'd love to hear your comments and ideas.

Write to us at [connections@courts.mi.gov](mailto:connections@courts.mi.gov).